# MY SEA and OTHER POEMS

BY THE HON:
ROBERT NOEL

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1896

A. O. Bev—

Letter for Christmas 1936

from

Conrad Noel.

1936

# MY SEA
# AND OTHER POEMS

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# OTHER POEMS

By the HON. RODEN NOEL with an INTRODUCTION by • • • • • STANLEY ADDLESHAW • • • •

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## AN INTRODUCTORY NOTE

In these poems selected from the posthumous works of the *Hon. Roden Noel* will be found many of those characteristics which from the first have rendered his writings notable in the vast poetical literature of the present reign. Certain aspects, indeed, of the poet's genius won for him a place somewhat apart from his contemporaries.

His were not perhaps the qualities that make for popularity. Like *Browning* he demands a loyal attention from his readers. This, few, alas, care to give—but those who can and do give it, certainly win their reward.

As a nature-poet he took rank with the greatest of his contemporaries, for he understood, as *Wordsworth* did before him, not only the external beauty of nature, but knew also the great guiding spirit that lies beneath it. He loved the natural world for its innate beauty indeed, but also because it was to him an outward symbol of an invisible Deity. It is this quality then that raises the nature poetry of *Roden Noel* to a very different level from the pastoral poems, of which we have only too many at the present day. Numerous are the poets, still living, who will babble to you of brooks and flowers, but few or none who care to fathom the deeper mysteries of nature.

But in *Roden Noel's* "Natura Naturans" we find a fine philosophical veneration for nature (so far removed from a mere sensuous appreciation of her beauty) fully exemplified. And we may note in passing how the Poet does not hesitate, in this poem, and in many others, to touch upon much that may seem ironical or cruel in Nature, or even to explore the darker shadows of life. From doing this *Wordsworth*

himself shrank, with the result that his nature-pictures though always fine, yet sometimes lack artistic completeness.

Though Nature in all her forms, appealed to *Roden Noel* most poignantly, it was the sea that inspired him with his finest thoughts. The sea, with its capricious changes from storm to calm, had an overmastering fascination for him. None of his poems are so fine as those in which the very clang and strife of the waters seem transmuted into words. In these poems, too, his technique rises to its highest level, and often their lines ring with a grand yet subtle music.

In this little book will be found several poems of the sea, none perhaps more powerful than the "Nocturne" where the waves take tongue and speak to the poet of his life, or the "Wild love on the Sea" where the hissing of the storm forms a fitting accompaniment to the frenzied outcries of the triumphant and lawless lover. The poem "At Porthcurno" will recall to many "The Little Child's Monument" with which it is connected in subject and akin in pathos. The Sea here, is represented, not in strife and storm,

but in joyous gladness, and as a comforter to the writer in his sorrow.

*Roden Noel* was perhaps primarily a nature-poet; undoubtedly his strongest work was inspired by the effect Sea and Landscape had upon his mind. But he was far from being only a nature-poet. He was intensely human, and sympathized as few literary men can do with the joys and sorrows of mankind. All who have read "Poor People's Christmas" will know how keenly he felt for the sufferings of the poor, and how bitterly he resented the cruel inequalities of modern life. Nevertheless, though this passionate sympathy with suffering made him strike at times what might seem a pessimistic note, yet he never preached the gospel of Despair, but rather pointed out wrong, that it should not fester unseen but be cleansed and rectified.

This sympathy with sorrow was accompanied by an extraordinary admiration for all Deeds of Daring. In this book is a short and spirited poem "Isandula" inspired by that same love of courage that urged him to write one of his longer and more strenuous works, "Livingstone in Africa."

These two characteristics of his temperament as shown to us in his art—his love for Nature and his love for humanity, are both as I have said well exemplified in many of his posthumous poems. Nor are examples wanting of his lighter vein. The delicious "Eros in May" the music of which is so delicately evanescent,—the "Inconsistent" where a lifetime is summed up in a few terse lines, and the pathetic "To a Comrade" are all excellent specimens of his lyric verse.

It may not be quite out of place, when offering a selection of hitherto unpublished poems by the late *Roden Noel*, to say a brief word concerning the vexed question of his style. It must certainly be conceded that the Poet was a thinker first and a stylist afterwards. There are indeed in his poems not seldom, lines that we could well wish altered and polished. But on the other hand his style invariably rises with its subject (a rare gift) and in his finer poems we come across passage after passage where thought and words are wedded in a manner only to be found in the great masters.

It is doubtless this inequality, this varying from

the heights to the depths, that has repelled those accustomed to the smooth, if somewhat mediocre, level of our Minor Poets. To whom we may say that this sustained perfection in which they so delight, is more often the result of Artifice than Art. *Roden Noel* had but little in common with our living poets, he was not the "idle singer of an empty day" nor did he consider perfection of form the final aim of Poetry.

Rather would he have seemed to take the much disputed dictum of *Matthew Arnold's* that Poetry should be a criticism of life as his standard of perfection. A criticism of life in all its phases, his poetry certainly was, and we may surmise, in the sense that *Arnold* meant; that is to say as a sympathetic interpretation, not as a callous analysis of life, which the foolish have supposed. For criticism without sympathy is after all but a dead letter.

It were futile, nay impertinent, to hazard any prophecy at this time, as to the place the work of *Roden Noel* will ultimately take in our literature. That must be left for posterity to decide. Let it suffice here to have noticed how his work

strikes a contemporary. It may be said without presumption that he has many and fervent admirers who will not easily let his memory die. For, like all writers whose work has been the subject of difference and dispute, he has commanded from his followers that tribute of whole-hearted admiration so rarely paid to more generally accepted talent. And this devotion has good reason for its existence. It is not the result of unthinking admiration. For there is revealed in his poems a noble nature that appeals to all that is best in us. What *Matthew Arnold* said of *Goethe* might be said with equal truth of him:

> "He took the suffering human race
> He read each wound, each weakness clear,
> And struck his finger on the place,
> And said thou ailest here and here."

STANLEY ADDLESHAW.

*Oxford*, 1895.

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## MY SEA, MY SEA

O MY SEA, my Sea!
From east to west thou callest me,
From east to west I follow thee;
I of the homeless heart go home
To hear thy lullaby of foam,
Thou homeless sea,
Whose dear voice hath no promise broken;
Of disappointing change no token
Thy sweet monotony of sound
Involveth, and thou callest me;
There's little human left so true
As thy deep billowy breast of blue
To lay the weary head upon,
Whose earthly day is nearly done;
Thy crystal doors would let me through
To the infinite beyond
From this our life's too galling bond:
Whether on the pebbly beach,

Or on sand, thy tender speech
Makes living music, or on rock
The jubilant dear surges shock,
I hear thy voice,
And I rejoice,
Who was so very full of pain,
I deemed I could not smile again.
They ask why—since I set my dwelling
By thy billowy bosom swelling—
I do not seek my holiday
Inland: I know not what to say:
Why I travel not inland
Indeed I hardly understand;
But, O my sea, my sea,
Mystic voices summon me,
And, like a weeping child, I come—
O sheen elusive, fluctuant foam—
Where you sing your lullaby,
There to live, or there to die.

Ah! the fault is all in me,
Who seek what here may never be,
Who adore ethereal dreams,
That lend our earth few fleeting gleams;
And yet I know one glimpse of love
Is more than mines or treasure trove;

But he hath swift wings like a dove,
Light-nets on clear-water sand
Are less than Love's entangling band,
Silent, unaware they come,
Silent, unaware, pass home;
But when Love flieth, when he fadeth,
Pain grows for something that degradeth;
Thy shores are flecked with crimson weed,
But Love's with drops from hearts that bleed:
So for me, for me
My lipping, leaping, laughing sea—
My sea, my sea!

# INCONSISTENT

A PROUD man, I adore the lowly,
Sinful, kneel before the holy,
Unclean, fall prone before the pure;
Rebel, salute Who did endure
Unmurmuring; give blow for blow,
Yet Him who, burdened with world's woe,
Unmindful of His own, fell low,
Glory to avow I serve;
And though men jeer, I will not swerve!
Lord, take my heart, and open it;
Judge Thou if that be hypocrite!
Gold, pomp, revenge, the sword, the drum,
Scorn flaunted full by Christendom,
In face of Him we feign to follow,
And worship with lip-service hollow!
Yet why take this mean Man for God,
Unless for His poor, dark abode,

## INCONSISTENT

Where gloweth Love's eternal fire,
We felt some hidden deep desire?
We are captive, who would fain be free!
Soul of my soul, O Lord, deliver me!

# WILD LOVE ON THE SEA

"O SING to me, sing to me, foam of the Sea,
Sing, while we sail, to my darling and me,
While we heel to the wind, the foam flies
from the bow,
My love laughs, we were never so happy
as now!

We rush through the water, we scatter the
spray,
The foam-bubbles leap in the blue light
away,
My sails are less white than your bosom
or hand,
We will sail on for ever afar from the land.

O dotards may mumble their winterly talk,
But the young joy of living their age may
not baulk,

We shall soon be beyond their bleak Northerly Clime,
Who fain would persuade us that love is a crime.

Never fear, never fear, nestle closer to me,
O we joy to bound over wild waves and be free!
For our bridal sing, winds! and, blithe billows, your song
Breathe into your clarion loudly and long!

Winds whistle, and fill the full-bellying sail;
Yea, what if they rise, and blow shrill to a gale?
My boat is a rare one, she swims like a bird—
Ha! what if the roar on the reefs may be heard?

You're the loveliest lady that ever was known,
My rival I slew, and the bride is my own;
Warm bosom to bosom, hot mouth unto mouth,
We are flying to lovelier lands of the South...."

"Nay, the sky's growing darker, I fain would return—"
"Your doubts are too late, love, your scruple I spurn;"
"I fear thee, I fear thee, fierce lover of mine;
"Thy lips are the wild wave, thy breasts are the brine!"

"Ho! with storm to the windward, and breakers to lee,
"They go swimming with Death, who go sailing with me!"

# NOCTURNE

At the close of a day in December
I went by the winter sea,
And my soul was a fading ember
In abysms of immensity.

Then God spake out of the gloaming,
Where the wave gave over strife,
And fell, wan, feeble, and foaming,
'Man, what hast thou done with life?'

I was ware of a mournful throbbing,
Of a seapulse on the shore,
And I heard in it women sobbing,
Whom I loved and who loved me of yore.

In a rift of the cloudy distance
Lay blood from the fallen sun,
While the wind with a low insistance,
Like a breaking heart moaned on.

## NOCTURNE

O blithely the sun ascended
With carol of bird and breeze!
And now his career being ended;
He fell through the leafless trees,
Amid sighing sounds of seas.

Do the life and the work fail wholly
For a man who hath lived and loved?
Through the joy and the melancholy
With finishing hand God moved.

# AT PORTHCURNO

O RUDE cliff-castle pile,
O resonant shell-shore,
Your clear green waters smile
In sunshine as of yore,
Rebuffed from the grave granite rock
With many a frolic water-shock!
Their laughter glads your sand
With delicate white foam,
A dancing light green band
Under a deep blue dome.
It is the same blithe scene
Of wild aerial glee;
But years have rolled between
My happy past and me!
And yet aloud I call,
In fellowship with all,
I catch my breath for joy
To see the wavelets toy....

Till stabbed to the heart I fall,
Remembering my boy;
For where the wavelets toy,
He did out-dance the hours,
Out-dance the briny brood,
Arrayed in soft sea-flowers,
While I defied the flood,
At flood-tide of my powers!
My forehead strikes the stone;
Convulsed with sobs I moan,
Hear voices calling, 'Come,
To rest beneath the foam!'

The day was even as this,
Heaven wore as clear a brow,
Sea and earth one bliss,
Ah! what is wanting now?
The sunshine of the breast,
Youth more blithe than day,
Whose every wild behest
Unwearying limbs obey!
The presence of the child
That made my world so fair;
From whose frame undefiled
The soul fled otherwhere!
O lilt of playful wave,

O dance of wild green billow,
Winning spells ye have,
Each following his fellow,
Clash, confound your foam
In your aerial home,
Refluent from the stone
On following wave to run,
Immingling treble laughter
With his that follows after!
And yet surpassing this
Were peals of boyish bliss,
When he danced with you,
And laughed into the blue!
Ah, what a harmony
Were then the earth and sky!
Now too like a knell,
Wanting the master-spell,
Their music seems to fall
On a heart beneath a pall;
For while live air I quaff,
I seem to hear him laugh
With the breeze and brine,
And, hearing him, I pine.
Yonder is the cot white-walled,
Where I brooded o'er my rhyme,
And the solitude ne'er palled

## AT PORTHCURNO

Amid the fragrance of the thyme
By wild wave and cliff sublime,
Yet I do not love them less,
Now I feel my loneliness,
Nor brook that hurries toward the Sea,
To hide in His Eternity!
And mine are a few hearts who love
More than wastes of foam that rove!
But, ah, sweet sea! you conquer me
With your unconquerable glee!
I plunge, do what you will with me!
Every fluctuant foam-blossom,
Glassed within a limpid bosom,
Foamy hair, dishevelled blown
In all the glory of the sun,
How ye race toward the shore
Immingling on a shelly floor,
Labyrinthine lines of light
Dallying with you in your flight,
While the gleaming birds above
Hover over fish that move
In the lucid realms they love.
Oh, how the young air abounds
With happy musical sea-sounds!
Waves are they, or young children's voices?
The world is young! my heart rejoices!

And surely he cannot be far
From here where such sweet voices are!
I will follow where you lead,
Flow over me, or wind your weed,
In a cave I'll learn your rede;
Where reposing at full length
I may recover youth and strength.

## EROS IN MAY

MAYBLOOM foameth pink and white,
Applebloom hath purple light,
Butterflies have fairy flight,
Leaves dally in their young delight.

Goldencups with burnished boat
On billowy verdure blithely float,
In labyrinths under, dim, remote,
Daisy and speedwell blend their fine
Trebles in the joy divine,
While yellowdusted bees hum over
Honied purple of the clover.

Soft, fertile gold fills every flower,
Birds warble and pair in every bower;
We yield to Life's abounding power!
Now, or never, Love's full hour!

## EROS IN MAY

Laburnum burned in burning blue,
Windwaves o'er sheeny grasses flew;
No blossom was more fair than you;
Longing lips together grew!

Now warm kisses melt, combine,
Limbs are white and warm and fine,
Love is more than mantling wine,
All or nothing, lady mine!

June, 1889.

# ISANDULA

NEAR the close of the dim day
That saw defeat of England's pride,
Two horsemen cleave their torrent way
Through the dusk overwhelming tide
Of those who hurl the assagai,
Ruin yawns above their ride
Swarthy warriors mown like hay,
Carrying with them England's colours
From the field of death and dolours,
Riding from Isandula.

Never draw they bridle rein,
Followed by the loud pursuit
Their swift gallop burns the plain
Until either gallant brute
Failing with the mighty strain
Faints with ebbing life, on foot
They take up the flight again,

Carrying with them England's colours
From the field of death and dolours,
After dark Isandula.

They have reached the swollen river,
Lurid twilight falls around,
One cries "Comrade, now or never,"
Both have plunged in the profound,
For the goal of their endeavour
Is to land on English ground,
From their flag no fiend may sever,
They will save old England's colours
From the field of death and dolours,
Flying from Isandula!

Two warriors on the further shore
Whose crimson glows with other red
Gashed and waterstained and frore,
Their countrymen discover dead.
Our colours round their waist they wore,
Royal on their lowly bed!
England on their heart they bore;
Wound in emblems of Her glory.
She remembers them in story,
Weeping for Isandula!

# MIDNIGHT

## I

BEWILDERED in a world of stars,
I wander in the dim midnight,
November mist their glory mars,
Bare boughs relieved on doubtful light;
I cower beneath the infinite.
Unseen one paces by my side.
The past gone far beyond recall!
Where now the laughter, joy, and pride,
Of life before the autumn fall?
My heart lies under a dull pall.
Dear forms and voices of my dead!
Restore them, O thou milky way!
Serene you shine, though they are fled!
The maze of worlds, cold, awful, grey,
Abides unchanged, but where are they?
I cower beneath chill eyes unmoved,

And like a lost child weeping go:
May hearts once loving and beloved
Be nought while ye are all aglow?
Nor you, nor them, nor self I know.
Where are they? only wild winds wail,
Or wander moaning on the wold,
Far surges on the rocks are rolled:
Gloom-involving mind will fail,
And the warmest heart lie cold.
O whelming wilderness of stars.
Of whom some never spake to men!
Blind behind our mortal bars,
Dare we boast our eagle-ken.
Vaunt poor Earth the centre, when
Other reasons, rights and wrongs,
Joys, woes, battle-cries, and songs,
Reign yonder? all-devouring gloom
Demands my soul to feed the tomb!
They dartling rays of varied splendour
Mutual service royal render,
While evermore their lights advance
In solemn many-motioned dance.
The pageant of the illumined Past
Surrounds me in dim dream-array;
Mine own, now vanished in the vast,
Once more I hear their voices say,

'Well-loved faces fade away:
'We shall be like these one day!'
We wonder at their funerals;
To-morrow men will bear our palls.
Sure that we shall always grieve,
Ah, how soon the tears are dry!
Vowing we will always cleave
To one love only, how we sigh
At other feet, yea, lightly leave
Ere Death can hasten to bereave!
Poor broken wrecks of Love and Joy
Lie stranded on the shores of Time;
Our Reason, a fool's broken toy,
Once loomed so wondrous and sublime!
Weak feet are ours yon heights to climb.
And O what puny hands to span
Twin spheres of nature, and of man!
One treads an insect into earth
Unheeding—ne'er a jest nor jeer—
Yet some inviolable hearth
Of private conscious life was here!
High Mundane Powers mock man's despair,
Who recked not even what we were,
But crushed us in their awful mirth.
Young Love, who leaps to life like Rhine,
Child of the hills, reverberates morn,

With laughter and with joy divine,
Exulting only to be born,
He crowned, abounding, feeds with corn
The races, warms their hearts with wine,
Yet the Life that blest the lands
Dies dwindled in ignoble sands!

## II.

She swathed him in his comforter,
And watched him down the miry street;
The dreary dawn was all one blur;
She heard the parting horse's feet.
He serves the milk from door to door,
The milkman his well-trusted friend;
But the mother trusts him more
To One who knows nor change nor end—
—The boy returns whom she did lend—
—But how? knifed, mutilated, stark,
With foulest outrage done to death!
O Power tremendous, dire and dark,
From Whom we all derive this breath,
(He slays, and He delivereth!)
Men owe Thee life and strength and food,
Thou canst loose, and Thou canst bind!
Yet I will not call Thee good,
And I dare not call Thee kind—
Until Thou deafen and make blind!
Is our awful world endued
With Demon's heart, that pumps black blood?

With sin, disease, and accident,
Thou doest what the murderer doth!
Amid wrecked trains burnt, scalded, rent,
Thou manglest babes of cherished growth!
To tell the horrors Art is loth.
Yoked to Hell's triumphal car
Toil we, prisoners of war?
Ah, longer than my peers forlorn,
I held to what appeared firm hold,
But now wild winds and waves have sworn
The loss of one who seemed too bold,
And plunged in the abysses cold;—
Over me their night hath rolled.

## III

And yet, what little hearts are ours
To hold the miseries of the world!
Behind our private belts of flowers
We play, nor view to ruin hurled
Our kindred, till for us Death lowers,
And summons from the pleasant bowers.—
Dare not forecast the Future—know
The doom that Fate reserves for you!
Look no World-Gorgon in the face.
Grisly Madness waits that way;
Only help as help ye may!
We have to pass the loathly place,
To reach yon heights of holy Day,
Serenely shining far away.
So we justify the Lord.
And kiss the terrible red sword!
Far throned in hidden eternal state,
Though wingless, desolate, she roam,
The Soul hath chosen all Her fate,
Now remembering not the Home,
Whereunto wealthier she will come.

If One who bore the wide world's pain
Heartbroken, blest and trusted God,
I may look up and smile again,
Kiss the plague-enravelled rod,
And follow where the Master trod.
Ah, surely, each is kin to all,
And man, a mirror of the whole;
Should worlds, gods, demons, aught appal
Who knows himself a conscious soul?
Give me but time, no bounds may thrall
One who hath God Himself for goal!
Ah, solitudes immense, profound!
And lonelier solitudes within!
Ye shine, O worlds, in solemn swound;
All the discord, all the din
Of a city's moil and sin
Heard from a tower, or from high ground
Blend to one great ocean-sound;
So from memories are lost
All we gladly would forget;
Faces white with Death's deep frost
Lose the fever and the fret;
So yonder orbs in darkness met,
Each a silver tranquil ghost,
Lose all of vext and tempest-tost;
By mortal eyes undreamed in day,

## MIDNIGHT

Revealed alone to darkling night,
They rest so far, so far away,
I deem their calm and gentle light
For our consoling seems to say,
'Absorbed within the Infinite,
'Deforming evils fallen away,
'No dishonouring care can stain,
'The Ideal only rule and reign!'

Dear places, feelings, thoughts, will go,
Calm revolving worlds will fail,
But when the stars have ceased to glow
Abideth One who ne'er can pale,
And all in Him, immortal, hale,
Our Life, abide; whate'er remove,
Remaineth the Eternal Love,
And surely Love will reunite
Who wander sundered here in night!
Surely Love will lead them home,
However far afield they roam!

Begun November, 1888; finished May, 1889.

## LIGHT LOVE BY THE SEA-GLORY

O LOVE, how the chorus
  Of billowy laughter
Softens here for us,
  And the winds' merry wafture
To a murmur subsideth,
  Dulled by uneven
Cavewall that hideth
  A span of blue heaven,
And sunflashing ocean,
  Yet all in a minute
If you make a mere motion,
  Your ear is full in it,
In the full tide of thunder
  Sea pours in his joying;
Even so with blithe wonder
  A child who is toying
To a shell's heart may listen,
  Hold the lips near, withdraw them;

How the jewel waves glisten,
  While sunny winds flaw them;
Green billows are blending
  Clear luminous bosoms,
Confusedly lending
  One another white blossoms;
Rank after rank they
  On the sand fall in froth, or
Where iron cliffs flank, they
  Rush athwart one another.
Grow transient fountains
  Cloudily foaming,
Robe grim craggy mountains
  Whitefurred with their coming.
Hear what a glorious
  Wild warsong resounding,
As from ever-victorious
  Hosts leaping and bounding!
Blue air is alive with
  Young joy of their forces;
Lo! how they drive with
  Tossed manes of white horses!
From flickering foam-blossom
  Shadows are sliding
Down the waves' hollow-dome-bosom,
  Gleaming and gliding.

Little shells on a yellow sand,
  With a wave-damascening,
Little wells in the mellowland
  Eyes of deep meaning!
The glad ripple in dancing
  On the shore with a light froth.
In his footing and glancing
  Leaves it marked like a night-moth.
Gems in the carmine
  Of dim fretted hollows!
The cave is a starmine
  Where the eye follows;
Purple seaweeds are laving
  In pure pools at leisure,
Languidly waving
  With delicate pleasure;
Fantastical arches
  With cloud's wavy margin,
Where the ocean-wave marches,
  Plumed cavalry charging!
You behold lonely islands
  On the sea's azure through them.
I feel they are my lands,
  I a bird flying to them.
... If the wet sand be sinking
  Under your frail foot,

That in water land drinking
  Groweth down like a pale root,
Sit here on my knee, love,
  'Tis firmer and drier!
Safe here will you be, love,
  From seas that aspire;
Ah! let us enjoy, love,
  The moment in flying,
Even while we toy, love,
  Daylight is dying!
Then will the hour come,
  And touch with forgetting,
Stars over our numb
  Forms rising and setting.
Alive the World-Wonder
  Flames thundering onward,
And while we go under,
  Earth sweepeth sunward;
I acclaim the wild world-masque,
  Who cease to be agent,
Who, faint with my furled task,
  Fall out of the pageant!

## TO ——

COMRADE beloved, and helpful soulfellow,
I fear lest that fine pallor I admire,
Wherefrom by twilight of thy rosy fire
Your eyes, like stars in limpid water, glow,
From pain and frequent weariness may flow!
Ah! more than one who loved me and my lyre
Hath left me darkling, and hath risen higher;
I pray thee, comrade, to abide below!

With tuneful voice, and with the poet's heart
You sing to heal and gladden our sad time.
With Mary you have chosen the better part,
Shedding soul-rays upon our weary clime;
Neither your friend will yield you, nor your Art;
He needs yourself, and she requires your rhyme.

## TO ——

*Translation from the German.*

BUT once again; my spirit cries,
I would behold thy face,
Ere in the sunshine of thine eyes
I fade, nor leave a trace!

It was a dream, a lovely dream,
I lived with thee my love;
All vanished, like the foaming gleam,
That on the wave may move!
There now remains in memory
Thine image, thine alone;
My heart broods ever over thee,
And longs for thee, mine own!

# TO A COMRADE

He said, "Now I shall go to sleep",* and
died.
Ah! brother, when shall we rest side by
side?
O God, O God, the duty is too hard
Ever, on every hand, Thy citadel to guard!
Yet, comrade, life is to be loved, and love!
Will not these two remain when all remove?
However deep the abysses that divide,
However roars between the sundering tide!

* Byron's last words.

## TO ——

As one who rideth pale and weary
Through a barren lonely land—
While the dull horizons dreary
Around, one solitude, expand—
Finds unaware a limpid spring
Of warbling water on the way,
Lovely home of flower and wing,
Gentle bird and flitting jay;
Parched lips unto the fountain cling,
In those wan eyes there dawns a ray,
New life to languid limbs they bring,
Chill October yields to May:
So thy brilliant bloom thy prime
To my heart was when I met thee;
O passion flower from sunnier clime,
In memory's garland have I set thee!

## TO ——

Glorious gain, or honeyed harm,
Thine the subtle, witching charm,
In thy large, thy limpid eyes
The labyrinthine mysteries.

Aug. 9th, 1893.

## GREY EYES

Lady of the large grey eyes,
Limpid lakes, aerial skies,
Home of heavenly harmonies,
Like a bird, my soul takes flight
To lose herself in ample light,
Warm and deep and infinite!
Soundeth all the gloaming mine,
Where the living jewels shine,
Passeth happy languid hours,
Dreaming in the lovelit bowers,
Wanders meshed in mazy flowers!
Patience, Courage strong and true,
Pity dwells amid their dew,
Tender flower soft and blue.
Yea, from care for human pain,
Weeping warm and gentle rain,
You would even embrace your bane,
Wanting only to sustain!

Roused by wrong, the starry dream
Veileth all her tranquil beam,
Cloud-enshrouded lightnings dart
Angers of a righteous heart!
Hideth there an earthlier fire,
To consume us on the pyre
Of wild, flame-beautiful desire?
I know not! only in your eyes
Limpid, large, responsive, wise,
Lo! my soul, a bird, takes flight
To lose herself in ample light,
Warm, and deep, and infinite!

August, '89

## MYSTIC MUSIC

FAINT memory of a dreamborn tune,
Muffled low the music sounded,
But the same air, reforming soon,
More lovely, ever more abounded,
Broke bonds where in the silence wound it,
Growing more articulate
From hidden orchestras that mould it,
Assumed a more majestic state,
Labyrinthine flower unfolded
Hourly by the breath of spring,
Until the Harmony all glorious
Rose on strong, expansive wing
Dominating, pealed victorious,
Erst budding, dim-divined thing;
Now the elate exultant hearer
Feels his heart arrived at home,
While that pæan ever clearer
With thunder-roll expands the dome;

His heart, a royal-ported swan,
Sails the sound, where wondrous vision,
As by some harbour-river shone,
Dream-palace fronts, the world's derision,
Deemed fancies vain! arow they flank
The flower-terraced shore; but pinion
Of the eagle-music sank;
Fell from that sublime dominion.
So a fountain fails and flows,
The organized high strain reverted,
To formless murmur whence it rose
The hearer's heart dropped disconcerted,
The flower withered to a close;
All the glowing glories faded,
Common day oppressed the view,
Dream-palace frontage blurred and shaded;
And yet, ah yet, he hears anew,
Evolving order from confusion,
The rhymic travail throbbing low,
Reforming kosmos; no illusion,
Whatever comrades named it so,
For he knew the breathing chorus
Not from him alone did flow,
Like spring-tides of the ocean, bore us,
Pealing at full flood again,
To goals beyond the primal strain,

More vital even, rich sonorous,
Fed on failure, want and pain.
He knew the anthem re-created
Ever by the general soul,
The human soul with nature mated,
Who lives to organize the whole,
That would fain evade control;
So the God grows formed within us,
And without us in the world;
Till the spheral music win us,
And our weary wings unfurled
Young, unwearying, unhasting,
Fulfil their high emprize, while resting.

April, 1893.

# NATURA NATURANS

The woodlands have a green world all their own,
Young joy of life among the delicate leaves,
To men who wander under them unknown,
Where whispering Zephyr light and shadow weaves,
And dewy-eyed blithe birds of various tone
Thrid labyrinths illumined; singing heaves
Their dewy bosoms while they charm the bowers,
And gaily set a-swinging many a spray
With buoyant, swift caprices; tall beech towers,
Mossed bole of mottled variegated grey,
From thronging grasses flecked with sulphur flowers;
Among the boughs a sweet perpetual play
Of living things newborn; a mystic sound

Pervades their interwoven sea-murmuring
roof,
Where love-built nests, where cooing doves
abound;
Of Love's high advent the young world
gives proof;
Love at full flood makes earth one holy
ground;
Love's hands aerial weave a wondrous woof
Of melody and mystery Divine;
So that I wish my dear dead for a dwelling
No lovelier than this lovely land of mine
When Spring arrives, and waves her wand,
compelling
A million blades and blooms to rise and
shine;
Yea, from sere leaf-lace, humid mould sweet-
smelling,
Life-feeding generations of the dead,
Beauty and health are nourished with young
joy.
Here the veined fragile sorrel bells are fed,
Whose leaf's a triple heart; babe roseleaves
toy
With hazel wands, wee crimson thorns they
wed

With wandering woodbine; leaflets tumble coy
Out of pink winter-cots o'er one another,
Rumpled and laughing; by sweet sun called early
Obeying the dear still voice of their Mother;
While infant ferns wake peeping scaled and curly;
Ruffled, fresh green leaf-sister calls to brother;
The warm South shepherds showers mild and pearly.
Here lady beech, embraced by her lord oak,
Leaned in his strong rude arms, while well content
Under their breaths young leaves immingling spoke
Softly, and then were silent, their souls blent.
The ecstasy of nightingales awoke
Within the downy-foliaged firmament;
Rivers and lakes of hyacinths meander
Among the teeming greenery below,
Where many a humming velvet bee may wander,
And the dew-elves' illuminations glow,

Mid tiny herbs, pale primrose, blue germander.
But those great aisles of pillared forest show
Large open spaces, clear of trees, whose mast,
And russet leaves of many years have browned
Floors, only greenlit by young fern; here passed
The storm's might, wrestling with the strength of crowned
Tall forest kings, and bowed their pride at last.
Yonder a piteous sight upon the ground!
Huge oak that would nor bend nor break, uprooted,
Though with prodigious talons it grasped earth,
Deepbased in Night; as high in Day fair-fruited,
Dowered with a home inalienable from birth,
It seemed, for ever here; whose fall was bruited
With league-wide tumult, when the storm's fierce mirth

Hurled low the giant, and a wide wound made
In rich brown soil; a very garden-space
Of mould and stones the tree clutched as it swayed
In that dread shock; there many a flower's fair face
Peers now mid those great rent roots naked laid.
The forest patriarchs live out long years,
Their inner secret all unknown to man;
They groan, they labour in the storm, with tears
Of rain they twinkle, glow with light; but can
Any divine what feeling saddens, cheers,
What mind informs the inarticulate clan?
Nay, they are resting on their own calm shade,
While men pine under them, men fume and fret;
The gentle grass and flowers are ne'er afraid,
With dews, not tears, the woodland ways are wet;
Though human hearts were broken while they prayed,

Serenely breathed the wee wild violet.
Yon trees live out long lives; our generations,
Like their own leaves, rise, fall about their feet,
Through periods; mere shadowed clouds men fleet,—
While these drowsed Druid forms keep wonted stations,
Lives individual, dynasties, and nations;
Their mystic souls and ours may never meet.
These have known rose-red youth, fair love, young gladness,
Have seen Heartshine ascend the heavens to wane,
Heard the blithe hunter's horn, bells tolled for sadness,
Seen child grow man, then turn to child again,
Stern, strong resolve fade out to halt, blind madness.
Their peers in age beheld the Red King droop,
His heart stilled by a random-glancing dart,
While pulsing with hot life, and loud with hope;

Beheld the royal jester, lewd and swart
Cower mid their boughs from that rough Roundhead troop,
Questing like sleuthhounds under their green heart;
Saw Henry hide his Rose-of-all-the-world
In bowers like these, lest Eleanor discover
The adored and dainty morsel closely curled
Away from her, fierce wedded hawk a-hover.
He found her slain, the nest to ruin hurled,
Then raving anguish burned the royal lover.
But yonder ants with their economies
Are every whit as wonderful as man!
For note how each his proper function plies,
Counting for world-crest his poor bustling clan;
These have towns, loves, wars, long-drawn histories,—
And famous bards, with critics born to ban!
Ah, men! your laughter-moving airs and graces
Your fond assumptions of authority,
Seem antics to the calm eternal faces,
Regarding you from yonder world-eyed sky;
For haughty gesture, proud look, royal paces,

Turn palsy, rheum-drops, flotsam idling by!
Leaf-filtered sunshine lies upon the moss,
Between cool shadows, like a tranquil blessing;
The exhilarated merry branches toss
Their newborn leaves in azure air caressing;
With red-tipped daisies, cups of silver gloss,
Young Spring the wrongs of Winter is redressing.
Hearken! what passion-hearted wealth of song
With fire-spray, mazy blossom, thrills the air,
Vieing a moment, with more during throng
Of budded plants, that make wood-floors so fair;
From fountain-stems of pining low and long
Flies many-spangling rapture rich and rare.
The solemn-pillared aisles are misty-dim
With distance; their moss waves are green and brown;
All blends with the sweet mood of her and him,
Whose fair young forms are lying listless down
Under a forest lord of giant limb,
His dragon roots around their beauty thrown.

They leaned anear a stately tower of beech,
Against a caverned ruin of old oak,
Where nestling very closely each to each,
They were so happy that they seldom spoke,
Silently waiting for dear Love to teach;
Whose breath was gentler than mild airs that woke
In festal foliage, tenderly defined
Athwart the still blue waters of a lake,
A woodbird's flight away, where moorhens find
Their reedy home; with flash and plash they make
Warm stillness sweeter for the twain reclined,
As o'er the water their glad way they take;
And yet anon a harmless sylvan sound
Of squirrel, bird, or restless russet leaf
Startles the timid hearts with sudden bound,
They fear some coldly-prying human thief
May snatch the bliss wherein they both are wound,
So rich and rapturous, albeit so brief!
Fair woodland labyrinths weave green lithe arms
To roof the curly head of either lover,

And downy leaves are whispering soft charms,
While to and fro the nimble Ariels hover,
Fanning desire that never dreams of harms,
Whatever sword unseen be hanging over.
Fine limbs, fair undulating delicate flesh,
Invite to joy the solitude allows,
While vital sap that rises pure and fresh
Challenging calls the kindred blood which flows
In their warm veins; sun weaves a glowing mesh
With foliaged shadows on the smooth, white skin;
From Pleasure's mantling bowl the ripe lips quaff;
They hear the cuckoo-call leave off, begin
Ever afresh, doves coo, and the wild laugh
Of woodpecker, tit's tinkle clear and thin,
Yet for a moment they observe what half
Alarms; it stares, they deem, with spectral scowl,
A dwarfed, deformed trunk, hugegirthed, mouldering, dark,
By Heaven's bolt blasted; a monk's shadowy cowl

It seems to wear, one blackened arm stretched
stark,
As in denunciation; a grim ghoul
Head-tentacled, with fungus-blotched rude
bark,
(In such a scene the Druid poured young
blood!)
But not one leaf upon its monstrous age;
This chilled their hearts a moment as it
stood
In dead brown drifts, an evil-threatening
mage;
Yet subtle spells rose from the breathing
wood!
The caterpillar in a fine silk swung
From frondage o'er them, hued like pale
green jade,
While flower-bells a fairy peal faint rung;
In leafy cradles the aurelia swayed,
And now the lovely lovers closer clung,
Feeling a summer-sense in all the glade....
But far away one heard the woodman's axe
Splinter the cream-white, fragrant woods
resounding;
Muscle-ridged arms, and supple stalwart
backs

The man-surpassing years of trees are rounding;
So God, the woodman, clears the space He lacks
Among His men and women, too abounding;
To warm Himself the human faggot stacks.
Is it Dame Nature's frolic thus to dangle
Baits She who made us knows we can't resist?
Set Conscience and blind Passion all a-jangle,
Then frown because we have too hotly kissed,
And done her bidding; bad folk will she mangle?
Nay, for Her mills use bad and good for grist!

## I

Mid gorgeous autumn gold she creeps to die;
All the deep forest burns with wondrous fires;
The low red sun glares like God's angry eye,
Through black contorted boughs, whose leafy lyres
Are muttering veiled oracles on high,
While she flits haggard through rain-sodden mires,
Her heart a-flame; wild-eyed and pale she fares;
The branches pluck at her the while she goes;
Few songsters warble where the hectic flares,
But on a winedark bramble the wind blows
Some soft grey down blood-reddened; an owl scares
Her hooting from the hollow oak; she knows
That place too well; the lake is at her feet,
Where he and she lay lapped in heaven's bliss!
Dimrobed in cloth of gold those beeches greet

Her, stately curtseying; dusk waves they kiss,
In carmined mirrors their own image meet,
Whispering, "Maiden, here your haven is
"From the hard world!" dense-thronged around the lake,
Whereon there lay a kind of oily scum.
A misty phantom brood; she deemed they spake,
"Poor child! and can you hesitate to come,
"When Love and all your cruel race forsake,
"Where kind Oblivion offers you a home?"
The tall grey heron in chill twilight stands
Unmoved as stump or stone, until it hears
A plash, a human cry; the form expands
Wide wings; a grey ghost flies; she disappears;
The water-rings grow large.
—One roamed the strands,
Days after, a young man beset with fears
For her strange flight; he saw above the water
At dusk a pale light by the sighing grove;
Upon him wandering the labourer's daughter,
Missed from her home, flashed unaware, his love,

Though she loved a young noble; her self-
slaughter
Will soon be plain when that dread treasure-
trove
Grim grappling-irons labouring up-buoy,
An awful formless burden which was youth,
Inanimate dim chaos which was joy!

## II

But ah, the cruel vision, void of ruth,
Shifts now the scene, to show love's brittle toy
Broken, mid direr deathsheads of dull truth!
See those once lovely lovers walk the earth,
Still side by side, for both are living yet.
Yea, they were married; but the morning mirth
Hath yielded to chill rain, and dull regret.
In the gaunt winter woodlands there is dearth
Of life and song; in those twinned hearts who met
To dance at early dawn, there dance grim Death,
And pale gaunt Horror, with a ghastly motion;
For now no dear enchantment of Love's breath
Transmutes dull Fact; as when through some clear ocean
Plain weeds form lambent fairy realms beneath;

But they have drunken Time's belittling
potion,
And through once warm veins creeps the
wintry frost
Of age, indifference, disillusionment,
Wrath, hate; each droopeth, a tired haggard
ghost;
Poor cankering cares for trivial things had
blent
With these to wither hopeful buds that, lost,
Can ne'er form fruit now; so, wan eyes
downbent,
They fare upon life's dreary barren road,
Snows of deep winter on bowed heads and
hearts,
As on bare-boughs that groan beneath their
load.
Ah! but the acorn dropped in summer starts
A winged green seedling from its blind abode
Of burial in kind earth; and sleep imparts
For renovation rest; the workworn dead,
Who only longed to cease, have found more
life
Unwearying; and hearts who once were wed,
(So, Faith low-breathes, with strangling
doubts at strife),

For all change, failure, torpor, wounds that bled,
In sunnier climes will grow true man and wife.
What shocks the best in us can neer be true,
Nor aught unlovely, save in outward seeming;
These are the larval Virtues that endue
Slow ripening perfections richly teeming;
They wore another aspect while they grew;
But Sense may prove less near the Truth than Dreaming.

PR
5111
M8
1896

Noel, (Hon.) Roden Berkeley
Wriothesley
My sea

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